



December 9, 2008

Contact: Erin Shaw 916.651.8791
Erin.Shaw@scsa.ca.gov

Getting California Schools Off The Grid

New guidebook gives school officials step-by-step instruction to generate the power they consume

Today, California's State & Consumer Services Agency (SCSA) announced the release of *Grid Neutral: Electrical Independence for California Schools and Community Colleges*, a step-by-step guide to help California schools and community colleges cut energy costs through on-site electricity generation. The guidebook is the first state-backed, comprehensive program for schools to use to create campuses that generate as much electrical energy as they consume and can be viewed [here](#).

"We pulled together the best environmental experts and financial minds to create an easy-to-follow guide for school officials to invest smartly in green technologies and cut their production of greenhouse gases," said SCSA Secretary Rosario Marin. "This guide will help officials navigate both the technical and cost phases of going green."

In September of this year, the Division of the State Architect (DSA) hosted seven collaborative workshops that brought together experts from across the country in energy, finance, education, non-profit and government sectors to brainstorm the steps to achieving a successful grid neutral school.

Secretary Marin announced the guidebook at today's annual Green California Schools Summit in Anaheim. The guidebook walks school officials through the steps to creating a school that will balance its use of electricity with energy that is produced on the school campus. Schools are advised on the use of solar panels that convert sunlight to electricity, solar-thermal, where sunlight becomes heat for heating water; geo thermal installations that pump ground heat for heating water and air, and wind power.

"California's schools are leaders in "green" education, it's time each one has the tools they need to become our state's environmental leaders as well," said Marin. "The Governor challenged California to reduce greenhouse gases to 1990 levels in 12 years and I believe our schools and community colleges will lead the way on his campaign by going grid neutral."

The guidebook also helps school officials understand the different methods for funding an electricity generation project at a school site. This includes power purchase agreements where a third party, who is able to collect on the tax incentives available, pays for construction of the solar project and monitors its production. Under this type of agreement, the school buys the electricity for equal to or less than market rates and retains the option to purchase the equipment to begin generating their own electricity. The state has already used these innovative agreements to finance projects at California State University campuses, prisons and mental health hospitals.

State funds also exist to support grid neutral programs. In 2006, the Governor championed the voter-approved Proposition 1D school construction bond which set aside \$100 million for High Performance “green” projects at California schools, which can include electricity generation programs. In December 2004, Gov. Schwarzenegger signed Executive Order S-20-04, ushering in the State’s Green Building Initiative. The Executive Order encourages schools built with State funds to be resource and energy-efficient, while creating safer and healthier learning environments. Gov. Schwarzenegger has led California in establishing laws and policies aimed at helping to promote renewable energy and fight global warming, including:

- Last month the Governor [signed](#) an executive order to streamline California's renewable energy project approval process and announced his plans to propose legislative language to expand the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard to 33 percent renewable power by 2020.
- In September 2008, Gov. Schwarzenegger signed AB 1451, AB 2466 and AB 2267 to build on California's commitment to increase renewable energy use. AB 1451 will build on the state's solar power usage by continuing a property tax exclusion for projects that utilize solar panel energy and expanding the exclusion to builder-installed solar energy systems in new homes.
- In 2006, the Governor announced his Million Solar Roofs Plan to provide 3,000 megawatts of additional clean energy and reduce the output of greenhouse gases by three million tons, equivalent to taking one million cars off the road. Now known as the California Solar Initiative, the \$3.3 billion incentive plan for homeowners and building owners who install solar electric systems will lead to one million solar roofs in California by 2017.
- Announced as a component of the California Solar Initiative in 2007, the New Solar Homes Partnership (NSHP) aims to create a self-sustaining market for solar homes and gain builder commitment to install solar energy systems. A new home that qualifies for the NSHP is at least 15 percent more efficient than the current building standards.
- In September 2006, the Governor signed the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, California's landmark bill that established a first-in-the-world comprehensive program of regulatory and market mechanisms to achieve real, quantifiable, cost-effective reductions of greenhouse gases. The law will reduce carbon emissions in California to 1990 levels by the year 2020. Gov. Schwarzenegger has also called for the state to reduce carbon emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050.

###